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ABSTRACT

Differential sex role socialization in Thailand was investigated, and the results were compared with trends observed in the literature based on samples from the United States. Two issues were of particular interest: socialization for aggression and severity of socialization. A sample of 1,896 Thai children, stratified according to sex, grade (first and fourth), ethnic origin (Thai, Chinese Thai, Muslim Thai), and place of residence (urban, suburban, rural), participated in the study. Children were asked to identify two instances of their behavior for which they were praised and two instances for which they were punished. They were also asked to identify the form of punishment. All interviews were conducted in the native language of the child by Thai university students. The interviewers kept written transcripts of the responses, which were then translated into English. Since Dennis' (1957) coding system proved to be inapplicable, a new classification system was developed through a post hoc analysis of the Thai responses. In general, the Thai data were consistent with American findings in that boys did not experience greater permissiveness regarding aggression and that boys were reported as being more frequent recipients of physical punishment than girls. Results suggest that parents may be promoting aggression in boys by using physical punishment. (RH)

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Differential Sex Role Socialization in Thailand

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Research on sex role socialization has often been of limited generality due to reliance on middle class American subjects. The present study was designed to investigate differential sex role socialization in Thailand and compare the results with trends observed in the literature based on U.S. samples. Two issues were of particular interest: (1) socialization for aggression and (2) severity of socialization. An unexpected finding has emerged from the aggression socialization literature. Despite the common assertion that aggression is condoned, if not encouraged, more in males than females, there is little empirical evidence of greater permissiveness toward boys' aggression (Maccoby and Jacklin, 1974). The American literature also suggests that boys experience more intense socialization pressures, particularly in the form of physical punishment than girls. Would these same patterns appear in Thailand?

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The socialization experiences of a large sample (N = 1896) of Thai children were assessed using a self-report procedure. The sample was stratified according to sex, grade (1st and 4th), ethnic origin (Thai, Chinese Thai, Muslim Thai), and place of residence (urban, suburban, rural). The children were asked to identify two instances of their behavior for which they were praised and two instances of behavior for which they were punished. They were also asked to identify the form of punishment. All interviews were conducted in the native language of the child by Thai university students. The interviewers kept written transcripts of the responses which were then translated into English.

The original intent was to code the responses utilizing a system developed by Dennis (1957) for Lebanese children, but review of the Thai responses suggested that Dennis' system was not completely applicable. A new classification system was based on post hoc analysis of the Thai responses. Although development of the system was somewhat subjective and arbitrary, independent raters achieved over 90% agreement on category assignment. For type of behavior praised the categories were: Academic Achievement, Family Maintenance (helping with chores), Care of Children, Contribution to Family Economy, Altruistic Behavior, and Creative and Expressive Behavior. The categories for behavior that received punishment were: Academic Performance, Failure to Contribute to Family Maintenance, Failure to Contribute to Family Economy, Physical Aggression, Verbal Aggression, Disobedience of Authorities, and Carelessness. Two major categories emerged in regard to forms of punishment: Verbal Punishment and Physical Punishment.

Punished Behaviors

Since very few Thai children reported receiving praise for aggression, the analysis will focus on punishment. The percentage of instances that boys reported punishment for aggression (number of instances of punishment for aggression divided by total number of instances of punished behavior x 100) was compared with the percentage of instances that girls were punished for aggression using the Chi Square test. Boys more frequently reported being punished for physical aggression than girls ($p < .001$). However, there was no significant sex difference in the instances of verbal aggression receiving punishment. Of related interest were the findings for the category Disobedience of Authority which included some aggressive beahviors, e.g., fighting in the classroom and

rudeness. The percentage of times boys were punished for such behavior was significantly greater than the rate for girls ($p < .001$).

There were some behaviors for which girls reported being more frequently punished than boys. These behaviors generally involved failure to attain adult standards of desirable behavior. For example, girls reported higher rates of punishment for poor Academic Performance such as failure to complete an assignment or low grades ($p < .001$). Girls also reported that they were punished more frequently for failing to meet Family Maintenance responsibilities such as house-cleaning, care of animals ($p < .001$). Thus, whereas boys seem to be punished for misbehaving or being "bad," girls are more frequently punished for failing to approximate adults' notions of the "good" child.

Praised Behaviors

In general there were fewer sex differences in regard to behavior that received praise than for punished behavior, and the differences that were statistically significant tended to be of lower absolute magnitude. The differences which did emerge tended to be consistent with "traditional" sex role expectations. Girls reported being praised more frequently for Care of the Children ($p < .01$). In contrast, boys were more frequently praised for Contribution to the Family Economy, e.g., helping with family business ($p < .001$). This pattern of findings is not surprising since Thai society is still quite structured in terms of traditional sex roles.

Form of Punishment

Research in the U.S. has suggested that socialization demands are more severe or punitive for boys than for girls (Maccoby and Jacklin, 1974). In

regard to physical punishment, this pattern was also present in Thai socialization practices. Boys reported higher rates of physical punishment than girls ($p < .001$). Conversely girls reported higher percentages of instances involving verbal punishment ($p < .001$). It should be noted however that for both boys and girls the dominant mode of punishment was physical (76% and 67% respectively).

In general, the Thai data were consistent with American findings in that boys did not experience greater permissiveness regarding aggression and that boys reported being more frequent recipients of physical punishment than girls. Indeed, in the present study boys reported being more frequently punished for physical aggression than girls. This result suggests that the common finding of higher rates of aggression in boys (Maccoby and Jacklin, 1974) may be due not to parental encouragement of aggression but to parental reliance on physical punishment for aggression. By physically punishing their children, parents may unwittingly serve as aggression models for their male offspring.

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